

EDITORS' NOTE

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Our current pandemic-hit reality interrogates all that we had taken for granted in terms of our reliability over the physical world and our response to it. The novelty and rapidity of the spread of the virus portends a complete disintegration of our supposed knowledge of the self and the sense of the world we inhabit, while it fundamentally gains over our vulnerabilities with relation to the environment. The state of affairs, far from being intelligible, allows us to rethink the relevance of literary spaces that are able to provide a reflective stance on the dimensions of social constructivism. In these trying circumstances, we invite all our readers to understand structured and unstructured formations of meaning within the contexts of aporia, apocalypse, and dystopia which have been the themes dealt with throughout the fourth Volume of *LLIDS*. Following this thought, our third Issue of this fourth Volume deals with *othered* narratives—the unseen, unspoken, and repressed aspects of our world—within the mode of Fantasy writings. While some believe in seeing things as they are, certain other voices of scepticism respond to the reality through visions of the fantastic that are gateways to renewed perceptions of the possible and the impossible. Operating on the cusp of the impossible, the unusual, and the strange, these fantastical narratives reimagine a way towards reconfiguring meaning when all existing attempts to theorize the sense of the world are blasted beyond comprehension.

Traditionally explored within the canon in the forms of analogy, satire, and allegory, fantasy writings showcase possibilities of reimagining our everyday reality through wide strategies of narration that have transformed the fantastic from being a marginally incorporated fragment within the narratives into an entire corpus of study itself. Creating a dialogue between the real and the fantastic, the known and the unknown, plural narratives of cultural and social assessment investigate the past and study the manifestations of an open-ended future. Such narratives, by way of worldmaking tropes, enable viable perspectives to spring from within the interstices of ossified frameworks of meaning-making. The recognition of historical constructedness in these narrative structures of the present clears ground for new constructions to emerge. The epistemological doubt, introduced through the fantastic in literature, is not a perennial subsuming of the unreal within the real; instead, the normative of fantasy narratives itself generates a space to apprehend the limitations of existing systems. Plurality of meanings within this semantically flexible space not only accounts for boundless possibilities *within* human experience, enabling us to break the limits of transformational possibilities of our worldview, but also certain absences thereof.

The formlessness of Fantasy, in contrast to more rigid genres within the canon, renders it counterintuitive to the unilateral representation of reality and mutates reality's reception within Fantasy by focusing on its narrative modes and techniques. The challenge mounted by these narrative strategies against the dominant political and cultural interpretations of our epistemological reality, seep into various other genres while permitting Fantasy to lay its claim to represent the irrational, imaginary, mad, oneiric, magical, and other such transrealist combinations. Within the mindscape of both the author and the reader, these strategies of the othered domain carve out an unconventional mix of themes relevant to modern culture and identity even as they remain subsumed within the existential thematic of lived real experience. That is why, Fantasy's aesthetic promise lies in its potential to function either as a radical mode of critique of our society or, for writers like Lewis Carroll, Kafka, Italo Calvino, and Salman Rushdie, as a mechanism to examine ontological, epistemological, and ethical concerns.

Presenting doorways to alternate spatio-temporal worlds, this immersive world of Fantasy delineates imagined story-worlds to the readers, allowing them to suspend the normative understanding of everyday life as they engage with the suprasensible that transgresses their human dimension. This twin functionality of Fantasy—of being autonomous and yet related to the reader's world—stipulates a vantage point for the reader to assess the structures of society and think of alternate narratives of history and its numerous possibilities. A fantastic text is thereby fashioned as an interface that brings the reader in contact with possible worlds, beyond the limits of acceptable and experiential, while remaining convergent with the world of his experience. This fluidity in the canon of Fantasy stands in opposition to the sedimented modes of thought to hint at the crucial dimension of *what if* that draws attention to the urgency of responding to the contingency of the present in rethinking *what we fear* and *what we want*.

The modernization of the tropes of Fantasy, influenced by the poststructuralist and postmodern viewpoints, achieves a blurring of the disciplinary boundaries between fantasy literature and dystopic science fiction or post-apocalyptic fiction whose features both constitute and yet transcend the former. The protean nature of Fantasy therefore redefines the boundaries of its constituency by resisting all conceptual straitjackets. Its claim to extrapolated speculations opens new horizons of the possible/alternate worlds that are investigated through the aspects of futurity and rehabilitation within its narrative. Fundamentally connected with the capacity to desire and conjure captivating worlds, fantasy literature helps us develop new sensibilities to reorient our expectations from the individual self as well as the society.

Faced with unabated waves of coronavirus and its multiple variants—members of the editorial team as well as our contributors have borne the brunt of this scourge—imaginative resources at the disposal of Fantasy have become ever more pertinent in these precarious times

to lay new foundations to the story of life here (and elsewhere). In the current Issue of *LLIDS*, Debjani Mukherjee's paper studies landscapes presented in Indian Cinema as *elsewheres*; the spaces introducing possibilities beyond their locatedness in social reality. Discussing the dynamics of psychogeography, it reflects upon the experience of cinema that moves the viewer through the mechanism of desire. Exploring the multiplex culture and the shift it has introduced in the forms of exhibition of landscapes, the paper uses *Shanghai* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, to develop a discourse on urban imaginary of a multiplex spectator. Our second paper explores a crucial dimension of Fantasy in connection with dream experience in the works of Alfred Kubin, Rocio Sola's paper maps the contours of landscape as engendered through amalgamation of dream and reality. The fantastic character therein achieved in Kubin's works underline the trope of rupturing spatio-temporal linearity. Engaging with the idea of heterotopia, Sola's fresh take on the Kubin's life and works brings out how dream as a typology of space informs the structuring of perceptual landscape which in turn becomes an expression of the artist's inner self.

The primary intent behind the publication of each Issue of *LLIDS* is to promote scholarship on a subject of contemporary relevance. The dire adversities of the present circumstances make us appreciate the consistent willingness and persistence of the academic community to continue with this effort. With the vision of playing a significant part in promoting quality research, we extend our commitment, support, and regard to all the scholars who have contributed to *LLIDS*.